University of Massachusetts Amherst

University Relations and Advancement Council

April 11, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: **P. Baillargeon (Chair), N. Buffone, J. Clark, C. Donald, T. Mackenzie, S. Masinter, N. Meehan**

Apologies**, E. Buzay, S. Fitzgerald, F. Iradukunda, T. Paik, O. Parkash Dhankher**

1. Meeting called to order at 4:07 p.m.
2. **Nancy Buffone**, Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations, introduces the members of her team in attendance at the meeting and gives an update on the University Relation's upcoming activities.

Chancellor Reyes' Inauguration:

- Details were provided about the Business Innovation Hub dedication at the Isenberg School of Management in honor of Doug and Diana Berthiaume, the campus's largest cash donors.
- The inauguration ceremony is set to take place at the Mullins Center on Friday, April 26 at 10:30 and will be open to the public.
- Following the ceremony, there will be a reception on the concourse and a private dinner at the Mullins Center.
- Various activities, including the spring game for the football team and a celebration of the alumni association's 150th anniversary at Bernie-Dallas Lawn, will take place on Saturday, April 27.

Founders Day:

- Discussion ensued regarding the Founders Day event focused on opening the campus to the community.
- Activities planned include musical performances, hot air balloon rides, and a glass blowing demonstration.
- Local middle and high school students have been invited to the event to potentially enhance future recruitment efforts.

Commencement Update:

- Details were shared concerning this year's commencement ceremony.
- The graduate ceremony is scheduled for Friday at 10:00 AM at McGiurk Stadium due to space constraints.
- A moratorium on events is planned for Friday afternoon to facilitate students moving out of residence halls.

- The undergraduate ceremony will take place on Saturday at 10:00 AM at the stadium, followed by senior recognition ceremonies throughout the weekend.
- The introduction of the Marching Order system was highlighted as a new approach to optimize the efficiency of the ceremony.

3. **Sam Masinter**, Associate Vice Chancellor for Issues Management, discusses upholding values of free speech, expression, and demonstration during upcoming events. The Incident Response Team (IRT), responsible for monitoring and responding to incidents, has been actively involved in the discussion surrounding the Chancellor's inauguration events.

Student Code of Conduct and Related Policies:

- The meeting touched upon the student code of conduct and potential changes or updates. It was mentioned that the code was last changed around 2018 with student input. All conduct cases are kept confidential, and only involved parties receive updates on the status.
- Mention was made of a recent student appeal to the Chancellor, indicating ongoing processes within the institution regarding student matters.

Demonstrations and Event Disruptions:

- The conversation shifted towards potential disruptions during events and festivities due to demonstrations. The emphasis was on the need for open communication and collaboration with organizations planning demonstrations to find common ground.
- Clear guidelines from the student code of conduct and the demonstration policy were highlighted to address disruptions effectively while respecting free speech and expression rights.

Balancing Free Speech and Event Participation:

- The balancing act between allowing free expression and ensuring event participation and safety for all attendees was underscored as a key challenge.
- The importance of maintaining a supportive environment for diverse viewpoints and expressions within the university community was emphasized.

Acknowledgment of Student Activism:

- Recognition was given to the university's tradition of student activism and the role it plays in shaping the institution's identity.
- The importance of embracing student activism while fostering a positive environment that values diverse perspectives and respectful dialogue was reiterated.
- The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to facilitating a supportive environment that respects free speech, upholds university values, and navigates the complexities of managing demonstrations and events on campus.

4. **Claudia Donald**, Executive Director of Digital Strategy and Interim Chief Marketing Officer, along with **Trisha McKenzie** and **Nubian Meehan** from the Marketing Communication team (MarCom) provided an update on the UMass Flex initiative. The discussion revolved around defining UMass Flex, its brand alignment, target student profiles, curriculum design, marketing strategy, and recent initiatives.

UMass Flex Definition:

- UMass Flex extends beyond traditional on-campus experiences, providing flexibility in learning environments.

- Aimed at offering students a dynamic and tailored academic experience for personal and professional growth.

Brand Alignment:

- UMass Flex aligns with the university's brand pillars: where big ideas are born, freedom to choose one's path, and a university for the Commonwealth.
- Fits into the brand framework as a leader in flexible and online learning spaces.

Student Profiles:

- Various student profiles represented by personas like Paula and Brooklyn demonstrate the flexibility of UMass Flex across different learning modes.
- Supports holistic, tailored learning experiences for students beyond traditional settings.

Curriculum Design:

- Discussion on the diverse ways students can customize their academic path through internships, study abroad, remote learning, and online degree completion under the UMass Flex framework.

Marketing Strategy:

- Focus on raising awareness about the flexible learning options available within UMass.
- Emphasis on engaging current and prospective students to promote flexible learning opportunities.
- Participation and support of faculty members crucial for successful implementation.

Recent Initiatives:

- Highlights of updating the UMass Flex site, attending the Optia annual conference, and producing informative videos to define the UMass Flex initiative.
- Promotion of UMass Flex brand through sponsored events, distribution of branded merchandise, and video showcases during key sessions.

Faculty Engagement:

- Recognition of faculty concerns and challenges in transitioning to flexible learning modalities.
- Importance of focusing on the student experience as the core driver for faculty engagement and adaptation to new teaching approaches.
- The discussion underscored collaboration, communication, and adaptation in integrating UMass Flex into the university's educational framework while addressing faculty, student, and brand alignment considerations. The team expressed optimism and readiness to navigate challenges and opportunities associated with flexible learning initiatives.

- Meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.